# KHNL Television

## Veterans Organization Lose Funding as More Veterans Need Service

July 7, 2007 01:22 AM EDT

By Leland Kim

KALAELOA (KHNL) - A House bill calls a $6.7 billion increase in the 2008 Veterans Appropriations bill, making it the largest increase in almost 80 years. That would make VA funding at $43.2 billion.

This comes after a local veterans organization lost about $200,000 in funding last week.

Tom Shields is a Marine, a veteran who's served in war zones all over the world.

"I was in the first Gulf War and I was also in Somalia," said the 43-year-old veteran.

He survived the combat zone, but was hit by a personal tragedy.

"Life was going good until my wife and son got killed in a car accident, and then I turned to alcohol," he said.

Shields eventually found U.S. Vets, an organization committed to helping our veterans.

"This is a great program, because it allows people to get off the street, take care of their addiction and get placed back in the work force," he said.

But just last week, U.S. Vets lost $200,000 in federal funding, which is about a fifth of their total budget. This news makes it harder for the organization to help veterans like Tom.

That's why people like Rep. Neil Abercrombie, D-Hawaii, wants to pass the largest increase in VA funding in U.S. history.

"We're going to make sure that you're able to come back into a society that just doesn't recognize the commitments you made to the military service, but to the life that you're going to lead afterwards productively and fully," said Rep. Abercrombie.

Veterans like Shields hope lawmakers pass this bill, so VA organizations can continue to help veterans.

"Losing my wife took me all the way down, U.S. Vets brought me back up," he said.

As more and more veterans come back from Iraq and Afghanistan, they hope these organizations continue to help them transition back into civilian life.